

PLANT OF MT. VERNON BRIDGE CO. ENTIRELY DESTROYED BY FLAMES

LOSS ESTIMATED AT ABOUT \$125,000, WITH INSURANCE AMOUNTING TO \$80,000

The Origin Of The Fire Appears To Be A Mystery

Whole Plant A Mass Of Flames When Discovered

Officials Make No Statement As To Rebuilding Plant

Nearly Two Hundred Men Thrown Out Of Employment

The most destructive and disastrous fire that has occurred in Mt. Vernon in years resulted at 7:15 o'clock Monday night when the entire plant of the Mt. Vernon Bridge company, one of the city's growing and substantial industries, was completely consumed. The buildings burned with great rapidity and in an hour after the alarm had been sounded the buildings were in a mass of smouldering ruins.

Mr. James Israel, secretary and treasurer of the company, stated during the progress of the fire that the loss would be very difficult to determine at the present. However, he estimates the loss from \$100,000 to \$125,000 on which there is an insurance of \$80,000.

In the present chaotic condition of affairs arising from the disastrous fire, no determination can be reached by the company as to its policy in the matter of rebuilding. An adjustment of the loss with the fire insurance companies and the clearing away of the debris will be the first things in order and after these have been accomplished the question of whether the plant is to be rebuilt will be acted upon.

The origin of the fire appears to be a complete mystery. It is known that it started in the south end of the large building extending almost to Chestnut street, but other than that there is no possible way to account of the origin of the blaze which wrought such havoc and destroyed the entire plant in so short a space of time.

The Fire Discovered

It was just 7:15 o'clock that the fire was first discovered. The blaze was first noticed by two persons at about the same time—one being Night Watchman John F. Stone, and the other Miss Clara Frehse, daughter of Mr. August W. Frehse, foreman of the plant. Miss Frehse happened to glance out of the window of her home which is located on West Chestnut street and discovered that the entire south end of the south building of the plant was in a mass of flames. Miss Frehse sent in the alarm to the fire department. The night watchman upon discovering the flames went to the engine room and commenced blowing the whistle on the plant as he was unable to get

to a telephone to send in the alarm. The engineer on a freight train standing in the B. & O. yards also assisted in sounding the alarm and repeatedly blew the whistle on his engine.

Origin a Mystery

As has been stated the origin of the fire, which resulted in the destruction of the plant, is a complete mystery. It is evident that the blaze started in the extreme south end of the main building in what is known as the "laying out" room. It is here that the large girders and other parts of a bridge are assembled. There was no rags or waste or grease or any kind that might cause spontaneous combustion. All over the plant there are numerous gas stoves used in heating the buildings and in that section of the plant where the fire started there are several stoves. It

is presumed, therefore, that the blaze started from one of these stoves—probably becoming overheated and setting fire to some of the woodwork in the structure.

That the fire started very quickly is evidenced by the fact that at 6:50 o'clock Night Watchman John F. Stone let Engineer John Croston out of the south door of the plant, immediately at the point where the blaze started. After letting the engineer out, the night watchman locked the door and went back to the engine room. There has been no night force employed at the plant for some time and the engineer was the last person to leave the building, outside of the night watchman. As a matter of fact no one was in the building and it possibly could not have been set on fire, although a number of persons advanced that theory Monday night.

After the engineer had gone home, Night Watchman Stone went to the engine room for a few moments and then had occasion to go to the south part of the shop. As he left the engine room he discovered immense flames rolling up from the south extremity of the building near the door where the engineer had gone out only fifteen or twenty minutes before. Running to the engine room, Stone commenced to blow the whistle on the plant, but in the meantime Miss Frehse had discovered the blaze and had sent in the alarm to the department.

The department made a rapid run, but before their arrival the building was in a mass of flames, the fire lighting up that section of the city like day.

Flames Spread Rapidly

A strong wind was blowing from the southwest at the time and was in the right direction to carry the flames entirely through the plant to the Sugar street entrance. The various buildings burned like paper boxes and in a remarkably short space of time the buildings were in ashes.

To Save Machinery

By the time the department arrived and three lines of hose had been stretched all hopes of saving any portion of the buildings had been abandoned and Mr. Israel directed the firemen not to throw any water on the buildings in which was located the machinery. It was the belief that if no water was thrown on the machinery that a larger portion of it could again be utilized, otherwise if water had been thrown that it would cause the machines to crack. Owing to the heat about the building it cannot be determined at the present time whether the machinery can be used again.

All that the firemen could do was to keep a number of streams playing on adjacent buildings to keep them from catching on fire. At several times the office building, which is located just across the street from the plant, was in great danger and two lines of hose were used in throwing water on the roof and eaves of this building.

At the time when it looked as if the office building might soon be ablaze, employees and willing hands went to work in carrying out valuable blue prints, records, drafting instruments and other articles from the office, but danger was soon past and everything was restored to its proper place in the building.

An Exciting Scene

At the time the fire was at its height the three large iron smoke stacks over the engine room on the east side of the building, near the B. & O. tracks, fell with a crash and following this a terrible sound was made by the escaping steam in the boilers mingled with the roar of the gas when the pipe was disconnected from under the boilers. There was an immense crowd of people in the vicinity of the engine room and many thought that the boilers were about to explode and the crowds started to run. There was a great amount of excitement for a short space of time.

The gas in the engine room only added to the fury of the flames when the pipe under the boilers became disconnected. There was no way to shut the gas off as the cut-off was so near the blaze that no one could

get within any distance of it in safety. The gas could not be shut off at the gate for the reason that the water works power house is supplied by gas from the same company.

Danger of Explosion

Another exciting feature connected with the fire was the discovery of some gasoline, paints and oils in a small building located to the north of the main building. This fact was made known to the firemen by employees of the plant and Chief Pickard stationed two firemen with a line of hose at the building and kept a stream of water on the structure all the time the fire was in progress. In this manner the explosion was prevented.

Fortunately there was no one injured during the progress of the fire, although a number of persons had narrow escapes from falling electric light wires. The top of a pole burned off just west of the main building and a number of wires fell across the street. Police officers were on the scene and kept the crowd back so that no one was injured.

Passengers Excited

At the time the fire was at its height the east bound fast line on the B. & O. railroad, due at 7:29, pulled into the station. The passengers were greatly excited over the fire and every window on the west side of the train was raised and every passenger was looking out to catch a glimpse of the burning buildings.

Big Crowd Present

Shortly after the fire broke out a large crowd of people commenced to arrive on the scene and in a short time the streets were literally blocked with people. Owing to the intense heat it was impossible to get within a half a square of the fire. The B. & O. railroad yards were crowded with people and the streets were a perfect mass of humanity.

Smoldered All Night

The blaze continued until eleven o'clock and it was midnight when the department returned to the engine house. After the blaze had been extinguished the debris smoldered all night long and occasionally there would be a small blaze start up, but it would soon die down as everything combustible had been destroyed.

The Loss And Insurance

As stated above it is a very difficult task to determine the loss at the present time. There has been no inventory for some time and it is impossible to determine the amount of work on the floor at the time of the fire and what amount of this work can be saved. Mr. Israel is of the opinion that the loss is from \$100,000 to \$125,000 on which there is an insurance of \$80,000, carried in different companies. Another thing to be taken into account in estimating the loss is whether or not any of the machinery can be again used. Of course, if this machinery, or any part thereof, can again be utilized, the loss will not be quite so great.

History of the Plant

The Mt. Vernon Bridge company was organized in this city many years ago, the original plant being located on West Vine street abutting the property of the B. & O. railroad company. Just twenty years ago the plant was moved to the location which is occupied at the time of the fire on Monday. The plant occupied a block, extending from Chestnut street on the south to Sugar street on the north. The buildings of the plant were frame with a metallic covering of some kind.

During the twenty years that the plant occupied the present location it was closed down for some time, but eleven years ago it was purchased by the present owners and has been running full force ever since. The officers of the present company are James Westwater of Columbus, president and general manager; Jas. Israel, secretary and treasurer; Irvin M. Wolverton, chief engineer. All of the above officers are heavy stockholders in the company.

A Touching Incident

During the progress of the fire and when the blaze was destroying as speedily as possible the various departments of the plant, a large number of employees gathered near the scene of the conflagration and many cried like children as they saw the place where they had worked for so many years destroyed by the fire demon. Especially was this true among the older men, who had started as apprentices with the company and whose hair had grown white in the faithful performance of their

duties to the company.

Many Men Out

Mr. Israel stated Tuesday that over one hundred and fifty men would be thrown out of employment as a result of the fire. The fire coming in the middle of the winter will probably mean hardships for many employees.

Mr. Wolverton Not Here

At the time of the fire Mr. I. M. Wolverton, chief engineer of the company, was absent from the city, having started to Cincinnati on the 5:15 train over the C. A. & C. railroad. He was located in Columbus by telegram as he was about to take a train for Cincinnati. Mr. Wolverton returned to Mt. Vernon on an early train Tuesday morning.

Condition of Machinery

While it will perhaps take a week or more to fully determine whether or not the machinery in the plant can again be used, yet it is the opinion of Mr. I. M. Wolverton, chief engineer, that the machines are worthless and can never be used again. Mr. Wolverton made a brief examination of some of the machines as best he could among the debris Tuesday morning and was convinced that the machinery has been ruined by the intense heat.

Why Flames Spread

One reason why the flames spread so rapidly through the plant was that there were six or eight gable windows open in the south end of the plant and the same number opened in the extreme north end of the plant. This created a draft of powerful force and the flames swept the entire length of the long building. This is proven by the fact that the roof first caught fire and was consumed and the flames then spread towards the floor of the structure.

Sympathy Expressed

The Knights of the Maccabees at their special review Monday night ordered placed on their minutes a resolution of sympathy from the members of the Mt. Vernon tent to their fellow members who were employed at the Mt. Vernon bridge plant and who were affected by the fire Monday night and to offer every assistance needed. The tent also expressed sympathy for the Bridge company. Many of the employees at this plant are members of the Mt. Vernon tent.

As To Rebuilding

While the officers of the Bridge company have nothing to say at this time as to their future intention in the way of rebuilding, for the reasons that that phase of the situation has not yet been reached, yet the hope is expressed on every hand by the citizens of Mt. Vernon that such a conclusion for action will be reached at an early day. It is a great calamity to the large number of employees of the institution to be thrown suddenly out of employment and their earning capacity be crippled almost in the twinkling of an eye. It is also a severe blow to the business interests of the city to have suddenly taken from the channels of trade the large amount of money coming with such regularity on the pay-days at the institution. On every side much sympathy is expressed for the company over its heavy loss and to the employees in being thrown out of employment.

OVERCOME

By Gas Fumes Were Mr. And Mrs. Thos Stream

Man Fainted While Telephoning For Physician

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stream of North Sandusky street were overcome from fumes of natural gas Tuesday morning and Mrs. Stream had a very narrow escape from being asphyxiated. When Mr. and Mrs. Stream arose Tuesday morning both were ill, but the former went to the Cooper works, where he is employed. He decided to go home during the morning to see how his wife was getting along and upon entering a room found her unconscious on the floor. Mr. Stream ran to the Cole grocery and telephoned for a physician. While he was telephoning he fell to the floor unconscious. Dr. James F. Lee and Dr. C. K. Conard were called to attend Mr. and Mrs. Stream. Both recovered from the effects of the gas fumes before noon and are now considered out of danger.

A few minutes delay in treating some cases of croup, even the length of time it takes to go for a doctor often proves dangerous. The safest way is to keep Chamberlain's Remedy in the house, and at the first indication of croup give the child a dose. Pleasant to take and always cures. Sold by all dealers.

TWO

New Bridges To Be Built In The County

To Take Place Of Those Washed Away

A Verdict For Defendant In A Case

Heard In Common Pleas Court Monday

Other Items Of Interest From Court House

The county commissioners at their regular meeting on Monday decided to rebuild two new bridges in Knox county washed away by recent high water and the county surveyor was directed to prepare the necessary plans. The plans will call for a 190 foot single span at the Balcom bridge and a 120 foot double span at the Troutman bridge. Each bridge will have a sixteen-foot roadway.

The commissioners also awarded a contract for the removal of the Balcom bridge from the creek for a consideration of \$87 and also the removal of the Troutman bridge from the creek for \$107.

A contract was closed up with John Rummell for 11,000 feet of plank for the Fredericktown bridge at a cost of \$319.27.

Common Pleas Court—

The case of Fultz vs. the Wright Lumber company, which was tried before the jury in the court of common pleas on Monday, the jury returned a verdict for the defendant in the sum of \$77.13.

The case of Dever, administrator, vs. Kirk was commenced in the court of common pleas on Tuesday.

Fourth and Final—

A fourth and final account has been filed in probate by H. M. and John Baxter, executors of John Wainwright Baxter, showing the following: Received, \$15,671.41; paid out, \$14,415.12; balance, \$1,256.29.

Marriage License—

John Crompt, laborer, Loudonville, and Ethel May Temple. Rev. William E. Hull.

Deed Filed—

Alonso Gibbs to Eliza E. Dodley, parcel in Jackson, \$890.

TRAMPLED

Under A Horse's Hoof And Badly Injured

Elmer Weaver, son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Weaver of Brandon was badly injured Monday afternoon by being trampled by a horse. The boy was leading a horse into the barn when the animal he was leading was kicked by another horse in the barn. Mr. Weaver was also knocked down and was trampled by the horse's hoofs. He was badly injured about the neck and face. Dr. Coburn of Homer was called and rendered surgical attention.

If troubled with indigestion, constipation, no appetite or feel bilious, give Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets a trial and you will be pleased with the result. These tablets invigorate the stomach and liver and strengthen the digestion. Sold by all dealers.

POSITIONS FOR OBERLIN

BUSINESS COLLEGE STUDENTS

Chas. F. Urschel, a district school teacher from Fostoria, entered the Oberlin Business College last May, and left school last Friday to accept a position at Robinson, Ill., to which he was recommended by the college.

R. R. Waltman left school Feb. 1, to accept a stenographic position at the Lorain Steel Plant, which was secured for him by the college. Both the above positions pay \$50 per month to begin with.

There is a great demand for students trained in the Oberlin Business College.

This contractor got results.

Some years ago a contractor building a railroad in a warm climate was troubled a great deal by sickness among the laborers.

He turned his attention at once to their food and found that they were getting full rations of meat and were drinking water from a stream near by.

He issued orders to cut down the amount of meat and to increase greatly the quantity of Quaker Oats fed to the men.

He also boiled Quaker Oats and mixed the thin oatmeal water with their drinking water. Almost instantly all signs of stomach disorders passed and his men showed a decided improvement in strength and spirits. This contractor had experience that taught him the great value of good oatmeal.

The cost was small; 10c for regular size packages; it is also packed in large size family packages at 25c.



Have You Noticed

That whenever an operator reports a line as "Busy" she adds, "Shall I call you?" This is an offer to complete the desired connection just as soon as possible, and if accepted by you, will save you much annoyance. Why not accept the offer and thus help us in our constant endeavor to give you most

Satisfactory Service

Central Union Telephone Co.
MAIN & VINE

Professional Cards

Attorneys-at-Law

L. B. HOUCK

ATTORNEY AT LAW

Office Rogers' Building, No. 111 S. Main street, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Rooms 2 and 3, second floor.

FRANK O. LEVERING

ATTORNEY AT LAW

All business of legal nature given prompt attention and especially to practice in the Probate Court. Office, No. 9 East High street, Mt. Vernon, O. New Phone, Office 104; Residence, 364.

D. F. & J. I. EWING

David F. Ewing John D. Ewing

ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELLORS AT LAW

Office, Kirk building, corner Main streets and Public Square, Mt. Vernon, O.

W. C. ROCKWELL

REAL ESTATE DEALER AND LAWYER

Farms and city property bought and sold and exchanged. Estates administered. Abstracting title. Fire insurance. Money loaned. Rooms 3 and 4 Union Bldg., S. Main st. City. Phone: Office, 370 Green; Residence, 633 Green.

If you own anything, have it insured

WILL J. "DOC" WELSH

THE FIRE INSURANCE MAN
18 E. Gambier St., Mt. Vernon, O.
Citizens' Phone 231 Red

STREAM & RIMER

Luther A. Stream Wm. F. Rimer

REAL ESTATE AND LOANS

Farms and city property bought, sold and exchanged. Properties rented and rents collected. Fire insurance a specialty. Representing 14 old reliable stock companies. Accident insurance, live stock insurance. Plate glass insurance, automobile insurance, in fact we can insure any property you may have. Surety bonds of all kinds. Call and see us. Room 1 Side Bldg., S. Main St. City. Phone No. 447 Black; Bell 253 R.

Physicians

E. C. BEGGS

DENTAL SURGEON

Office in Arnold block corner of East High street and Monument Square, Mt. Vernon, Ohio.

C. K. CONARD, M. D.

HOMOEOPATHIC PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON

Office and residence, 18 East Vine street. Citizens' Phone 42. Office hours: 2 to 4 and 7 to 8 p. m.